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Poe, Edgar Allan, 1809-18
Mr. Hawthorne's
description of his daught

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TITLE Nathaniel Hawthorne

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Hawthorne's ms. description of his daughter (Una) — copied by Anna S. Higginson

"

There is something that frightens me about the child. I know not whether Elfish or angelic, but at all events supernatural. She steps so boldly into the midst of every thing, shrinks from nothing; has such comprehension of every thing; seeming at times to have but little delicacy; and anon shows that she possesses the finest essence of it; now so hard, now so tender; now so perfectly unreasonable, soon again so wise. In short, I now and then catch an aspect of her in which I cannot believe her to be my own human child, but a Spirit strangely mingled with good and evil, haunting the house where I dwell.

Una, I think does not possess humor, nor anything of the truly comic; she cannot at all bear to be laughed at for anything funny that she perpetrates unawares, and when she tries to be funny, the result is seldom any thing but an eccentricity - a wild grimace - an unnatural tone, her natural bent is towards the passionate and tragic. Her life at present is a tempestuous day, with blinks of sunshine gush-ing between rifts of cloud - She is as full oftentimes of acerbity as an unripe apple, that may be perfected into mellow deliciousness hereafter. She has a very strong craving for sympathy, and yet a hundred times a day she seems to

defy sympathy, and put herself in a position where she knows she cannot receive it.

Her beauty is the most flitting, transitory, uncertain and unaccountable affair that ever had a real existence. It beams out whenever nobody expects it; it has mysteriously passed away when you think yourself sure of it; if you glance sideways at her, you perhaps think it is illuminating her face, but turning full to enjoy it, it is gone again. When really visible, it is rare and precious as the vision of an angel; it is a transfiguration - a grace - a delicacy - an ethereal fineness - which at once, in my secret soul, makes me give up all severe opinions that I may have begun to form respecting her.

She is never graceful or beautiful except when perfectly quiet. Violence, exhibitions of passion, strong expressions of any kind, destroys her beauty. Her voice, face, gesture every manifestation in short becomes disagreeable.

One night in Spring I asked her to come and go to bed, for it was after six o'clock. "Where is that six o'clock Papa, I do not know where it is." "Oh! I know where it is! It is in God's day, with all the other Sixes that have been." Once she broke forth in a chant "Oh God, wrongness never reigns."

She is not likely ever to be run away with by her imagination — her perception of reality is constantly on the watch.

MS.P.91.37.70

Julian said - "God is the most beautiful of Princes" - Una rebuked him and said "No, Julian, God is a King."
Una says "I am tired of all things" and want to slip into God."

Her auburn curls come down over her face, and as to her delicate little phiz, its spirit, grace and sensibility elude the pen that would describe it.

On my reproving Julian, Una comes to me with a remonstrance of no small length, the burthen being - "Papa, you should not speak so loudly to a little boy, who is only half years old" -

She comes out of trouble, like the moon out of a cloud, with no shadow of sulkiness hanging about her -

or rather, perhaps, like a rose-
bush out of a thunder shower
for there is a sort of dewy softness
remaining, although there is
the brightness of sunshine in her
smile."

Mr Hawthorne's description
of his daughter -

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